

## **Pet rabbits** – the most common illegal pet

**DECLARED CLASS 2**



### **Why control the keeping of rabbits?**

The rabbit is Australia's most destructive introduced pest. Wild rabbits cause more than \$600 million damage every year. They cause severe land degradation and soil erosion. Wild rabbits threaten the survival of many rare and endangered species of native wildlife.

The keeping of rabbits as pets is strongly opposed by many rural landholders whose livelihood is threatened by wild rabbit plagues.

## Restrictions on keeping rabbits

The rabbit (all varieties, including domestic breeds) is a declared pest animal throughout Queensland under the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management Act) 2002*.

It is an offence to keep a rabbit of any variety as a pet. The maximum penalty is \$30 000.

## Legal standing on pet rabbits

A proposal to legalise desexed domestic rabbits as pets in Queensland was considered in 1994 but was rejected by the Departments of Primary Industries and Fisheries and Environment and Heritage. The proposal was also opposed by several local governments and grazier groups.

The present ban on pet rabbits has not been lifted and the **keeping of all rabbits (domestic or otherwise) as pets remains illegal in Queensland**.

## Permits

A permit cannot be issued for keeping pet rabbits of any variety for any private purpose.

A permit to keep domestic rabbits in Queensland can only be approved if the animal is being kept for an approved purpose:

- public entertainment – certain forms of public entertainment, including magicians and circuses
- scientific and research purposes – universities only
- Permits will not be issued to mobile farms or pet stores.

Permits to breed rabbits are only issued to recognised scientific institutions. Breeding of rabbits for any other purpose is an offence.

## General information

The domestic varieties and the wild (grey) variety of rabbits are the same species, although the domestic varieties have been heavily modified via years of cross-breeding and selection by rabbit enthusiasts.

Although most escaped domestic rabbits are probably killed by feral cats, dogs and foxes, there is evidence that a small proportion of escaped female domestic rabbits will survive and can breed successfully with wild male rabbits.

Wild rabbits were originally imported into Australia in 1859 and released for hunting purposes in Victoria.

The wild rabbit has since spread over most of Australia. There may be over 400 million wild rabbits in Australia today.

Small colonies of domestic rabbit varieties have established on islands, where predators are absent.

## Further information

Further information is available from animal control/environmental staff at your local government, or if your council does not have animal control staff, from your local Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries Land Protection Officer: contact details available through 13 25 23.